

HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOM: Ensuring the Liberties of Our People

The leaders of the Americas have repeatedly expressed their commitment to protecting the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all people in our hemisphere, especially those individuals who are vulnerable, disabled, or marginalized in our societies.

As a reflection of this commitment, leaders at the Quebec City Summit called for new programs to promote and protect human rights; to ensure full and equal legal rights for women, indigenous citizens, people with disabilities, and other minority groups; and to further strengthen multi-national organizations that deal with human rights.

The United States, working bilaterally and region-wide, actively supports hemispheric efforts to strengthen and promote human rights. The U.S. has worked to strengthen human rights protections by supporting additional funding for the inter-American human rights system and by providing funds to strengthen governmental and non-governmental organizations that are charged with preventing human rights violations at a national level. Recognizing the necessity of continuing education and training, the U.S. has assisted in the training of police and correctional officers, the reduction of pre-trial detainees, and the enhancement of human rights education for judges, magistrates, and other court officials in the region. The U.S. has also helped fund efforts to create an inter-American program on the human rights of migrants.



Justice Court President Dr. Hector Romero signs Ecuador's constitution. At right is Assembly President Roberto Mejia, who helped create the document. (Dolores Ochoa, AP/WWP)

U.S. ACTIONS TO IMPLEMENT THE HEMISPHERE'S AGENDA

- The U.S. ratified two Protocols to the **Convention on the Rights of the Child** in 2002. The Optional Protocol on Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict makes it a crime to force children into military service, raises the age for the draft to 18, and promotes cooperation to rescue and rehabilitate former child combatants. The Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and Child Pornography, which requires countries to outlaw pornography and prostitution by children, provides tools to improve law enforcement cooperation and to help ensure that offenders can be prosecuted regardless of where they are found.
- The U.S. provided funding for the November 2002 **Hemispheric Conference on International Migration: Human Rights and Trafficking in Persons in the Americas**, co-organized by the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), with the collaboration of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) and the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).